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SOTHEBY AND CO.
34 & 35, NEW BOND STREET, W. 1.

CATALOGUE

OF

THE PASTON LETTERS.

The Property of the Rt. Hon. E. G. Pretyman,

Orwell Park, Ipswich.

[SOLD BY LEAVE OF THE COURT].

Day of Sale.

WEDNESDAY, THE 1ST OF APRIL.

1931.

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12 1450. 27. Mart. 28. H. 6.

Copied, noted

Trusty and Wellebeloved frende I greete you well. And forasmuch as I have late vnderstand that Thomas Howes hath disseyned my tenant in Castlecombe by the pretense of certeyn Indentures of the office of Duchy of Lancaster, and ye know well that I nyme dehised Wyne of certeyn, I am leydon to remedie the said Indentures and as I was informed he said he would obey it. And now his office doth the contrary, prayng you to commen with Thomas Howes and my learned counsell to see what remedie may be in this matter. And whether shulde or one other man ought distrayn within my lordship, considering the losse that they have of it. Also as vnderstand that I have grete loss to the decrese of xl. shepe pasture yerlye by lak of the ferme of Burton lond and other lond, as in my barlye desaut and my chyrrend yon from my place and I have none amendys ne remedie sett vpon it which is in the default of you and myne officers. Also ye said I pay for londes I purchase to Lynne which parcell of the said londes longyth to me. And yet I have not all the londes which I pay for to Lynne but is stopped by Brampton and other there about. Prayng and chargyng you that this be remedied as ferre as is in your, and the place wherof I am you counsell. I pray not that ye shuld due to most fine be cause hys children bynge with you for I wold that Janhyn Porter have that at yis tyme and yn lyke wise I myne delivere as to the v. mylle to vesyte I have wrytte to you myne entent. And that ye wille I messe Janhyn to dwen myne tenty yede wille as he doyngt to do. The yson of Brandyson was at a court of Thurnyng and held my tenant complyn of the grete hurt I have of my pasture by desaut of yede sulvenyng and the lordy of Burtons dyt of my hand in myne dislayes hynde that at may be amended I pray you I wrytte you an direct for John Ryston as for secure of hys disease I pray you labour it effectually yff it may be don. Almyghty god kepe you wrytte at London xxvij day of Aprill A° xxix° H. vj.

And I pray you sende me word who dare be so hardy to breke dyen you in my vyght. And pay them on my halfe that they shall be swyt as ferre as law and reson wolle. and yff they wille not dreade ne obey thys. they they shall be nyyt by Blackeed ou whyteheed that ye to pay by god or the debyte. And therfor I thanke you sud me word whether such as have be myne tenyaues before thys tyme contynue still yn hey wrthfulnesse. Ye

Also I have oft tymes manye sterme rapports of demeanyng of the gouernour of my place at Caste, other plaes as yn my chyrell appendynge. an my wynnyd the keepyng of my wardrobe, clothes the Avowle of my comes at Blandson etc. appendyent of my londes. Nyng ton hereby as my fill trust yo yn you to help vesome it. And that yo suffre no vicyouse man at my place of Castle. Abide but worthynnes and diligence as ye wolle Answere to it

Sir John Fastolf to Sir Thomas Howes, Parson of Castlecombe, 27 March, 1450.

20 Copied, noted

Worshipfull and my right trusty and Wellebeloved frende I greete yon well and for asmuch as I have purchased of the Worshipfull and my Wellebeloved frende Jhoune of Wallsynghill ye manoir in litel Swayng vt thappurtenances in the Countee of Norff which manoir is depend of Wallcotes I desire and specially prayie yow that ye wolle shewe to me and my feoffes in my name yone good will and fauour so that I may by yone frendship the more perfitly enjoy my forsaid purchase. And more ou I praye yon to yeve credence in this matter to my Wellebeloved chapellayn Sir John Ditchesell lecter of thes my lett. And in the same mate to be my perfitfull frende as my trust trust is in yon wherein ye shall do to me a singuler pleasure and cause me to be to yde right good lord which sumtyme shall be to yon. Made by the grace of god Wich yeve yon and sendyon welfare yeven under my signet at Midellhill the xxvij day of August

Richard Earl of Warwick

H. 6.

23 Aug:

Richard Neville created Earl of Warwick in 1449
he was called the King-maker, the Great Earl of Warwick.
he was killed at the battle of Barnet on Easter day 1471.
fighting against Edward IV.

The Seal has his Cognizance - the Bear & ragged Staff.
Paper mark — Crop Hays.

To the Worshipfull and my right trusty frende John Paston Esquyer

Earl of Warwick (the King-maker) to John Paston.

CATALOGUE

OF

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE ORIGINAL LETTERS

MANY WRITTEN BY HISTORICAL PERSONAGES,

1440-1483,

KNOWN AS

THE PASTON LETTERS,

INLAID & BOUND BY SIR JOHN FENN IN THE XVIII CENTURY IN THREE VOLUMES.

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The Rt. Hon. E. G. Pretyman,

Orwell Park, Ipswich.

DAY OF SALE.

Wednesday, April 1st, 1931.

THE SERIES OF 155 ORIGINAL LETTERS WRITTEN IN THE REIGNS OF HENRY VI, EDWARD IV AND RICHARD III (1440-1483), FOR THE MOST PART FROM OR TO MEMBERS OF THE PASTON FAMILY OF NORFOLK, MANY BEARING THE AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURES OF PERSONS OF IMPORTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF THE TIME. Bound in the XVIII century in 3 oblong vols. into the leaves of which the letters are inlaid; *half calf, with the book-plate of Sir John Fenn, the Norfolk antiquary, and his crest on the backs; with few exceptions the letters are in excellent condition, many with the original seals*

£5500 Addington

It is unnecessary to emphasise the importance of the Paston letters, which have been celebrated both as historical documents and for their great human interest ever since the publication of the present collection in 1787. The majority of the remaining Paston letters are in the British Museum; a few are at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and there are related documents in the Bodleian Library and at Magdalen College, Oxford. It is therefore certain that no other considerable collection can ever again appear for sale.

The letters now offered are those printed by Sir John Fenn in the first two volumes of his edition. They were selected by him as being the most important of the large number which had come into his possession by purchase in 1773, and on publication they were so enthusiastically greeted by Horace Walpole and the cultivated world generally that a second edition was called for within the year. Fenn's merits as an editor were considerable, his transcriptions in particular being remarkably accurate, but he felt himself under no obligation to print the whole of every letter and in many cases he has in fact made large omissions, amounting in all to nearly 8000 words.

The edition of the whole correspondence given in 1872 by James Gairdner of the Public Record Office and enlarged by him in 1904 is provided with notes and a long Introduction, but though the originals of Fenn's first two volumes, lost for many years, had come to light before the publication of Gairdner's second edition, he was content to reprint Fenn's text of the letters, which have thus NEVER BEEN EDITED FROM THE ORIGINALS SINCE 1787, AND THEN ONLY WITH LARGE OMISSIONS.

[In the following notes *F.* refers to Sir John Fenn's second edition, 1787; *G.* to Gairdner's Library Edition, 1904. Modernized spelling is used in the extracts.]

The Characters of historical importance represented here include Warwick the King maker (two letters, *F.* i. 84, 88; *G.* II. 98, 257): Elizabeth Duchess of Suffolk, sister of Edward IV, a holograph letter written under great stress (*F.* ii. 292; *G.* VI. 993); the 12th and 13th Earls of Oxford, and John Howard Duke of Norfolk. One of the letters from the last-named shows the liabilities of country gentlemen, such as the Pastons, to their feudal superiors (*F.* ii. 314; *G.* VI. 994).

Right well beloved Friend, I commend me to you. It is so that the Kentishmen be up in the weld, and say that they will come and rob the City, which I shall let if I may.

Therefore I pray you that with all diligence ye make you ready and

come hither, and bring with you six tall fellows in harness; and you shall not lose your labour, that knoweth God, who have you in his keeping.
Written at London, the 10th day of October [1483].
Your Friend, J. Norfolk.

From Sir John Fastolf, who died without heirs in 1459, and the disposal of whose great estates was the cause of so much trouble in Norfolk, there are two letters of characteristic bluster:

Send me word who dare be hard to kick against you in my right; and say to them on my behalf that they shall be quit as far as law and reason will. And if they will not dread nor obey that, then they shall be quit by Blackbeard or Whitebeard that is to say by God or the Devil.

(*F.* i. 52; *G.* II. 125).

Among the letters from adherents of the Paston family are many accounts of exciting scenes and events, such as William Lomner's letter about the Duke of Suffolk's capture and beheading at sea (*F.* i. 38; *G.* II. 120), James Gresham's story of the bloodthirsty raid on the lawyer Nicholas Radford's country-house by the Earl of Devonshire's son, in which old Radford was dragged out and killed after the sack of his house (*F.* i. 114; *G.* III. 303), or Robert Wenyngton's account of the capture of 100 ships of Pruss, Lubeck, Campen, Rostock, etc., the guarding of which he is finding a very anxious problem (*F.* i. 208; *G.* II. 90). It is not possible, within the limits of a sale catalogue, to do more than mention a few of these remarkable letters, but we may quote as an example James Payn's account of his experiences in the rebel camp at Blackheath when Jack Cade was encamped there in the summer of 1450 (*F.* i. 54; *G.* II. 126). He writes to John Paston:

My master Sir John Fastolf . . . commanded [me] to take a man, and two of the best horses that were in his stable, with him to ride to the Commons of Kent, to get the Articles that they come for, and so I did and all so soon as I come to the Blackheath, the Captain made the Commons to take me; and for the savation of my master's horses I made my fellow to ride away with the two horses; and I was brought forthwith before the Captain of Kent; and the Captain demanded of me, what was my cause of coming thither, and why that I made my fellow steal away with the horses; and I said that I came thither to cheer with my wife's brethren and gossips of mine that were present there; and then was there one there who said to the Captain, that I was one of Sir John Fastolf's men, and the two horses were Sir John Fastolf's; and then the Captain let cry Treason upon me throughout all the field . . . proclaiming openly that I was sent thither to espy their habiliments of war from the greatest Traitor that was in England . . . And moreover he said that Sir John Fastolf had furnished his place with the old soldiers of Normandy and habiliments of war to destroy the Commons of Kent when they came to Southwark, and therefore he said plainly that I should lose my head; and so forthwith I was taken and led to the Captain's tent and one axe and one block was brought forth for to have smitten off my head; and then my master Poynyngs, your brother [in-law] with other of my friends came, and letted the Captain, and said plainly, that there should die an hundred or two in case that I died; and so by that mean my life was saved at that time.

From members of the Paston family there are 54 letters of which 7 are from Margaret, the capable and energetic wife of John Paston, son of the founder of the family fortunes.

On March 12, 1449, Margaret Paston writes to her husband (in a letter from which Fenn has made large omissions):

> There have been many enemies against Yarmouth and Cromer, and have done much harm, and taken many English men . . . and the said enemies have been so bold that they come up to the land and play them on Caister sands and in other places, as homely as they were Englishmen; folks be right sore afraid, that they will do much harm this summer . . .

(*F.* i. 28; *G.* II. 106).

Again on 20 Apr. 1453, after describing Margaret of Anjou's visit to Norwich, she says:

> I pray you that you will do your cost on me against Whitsuntide, that I may have something for my neck: when the Queen was here I borrowed my cousin Elizabeth Clere's [ornament] for I durst not for shame go with my Beads amongst so many fresh gentlewomen as here were at that time.

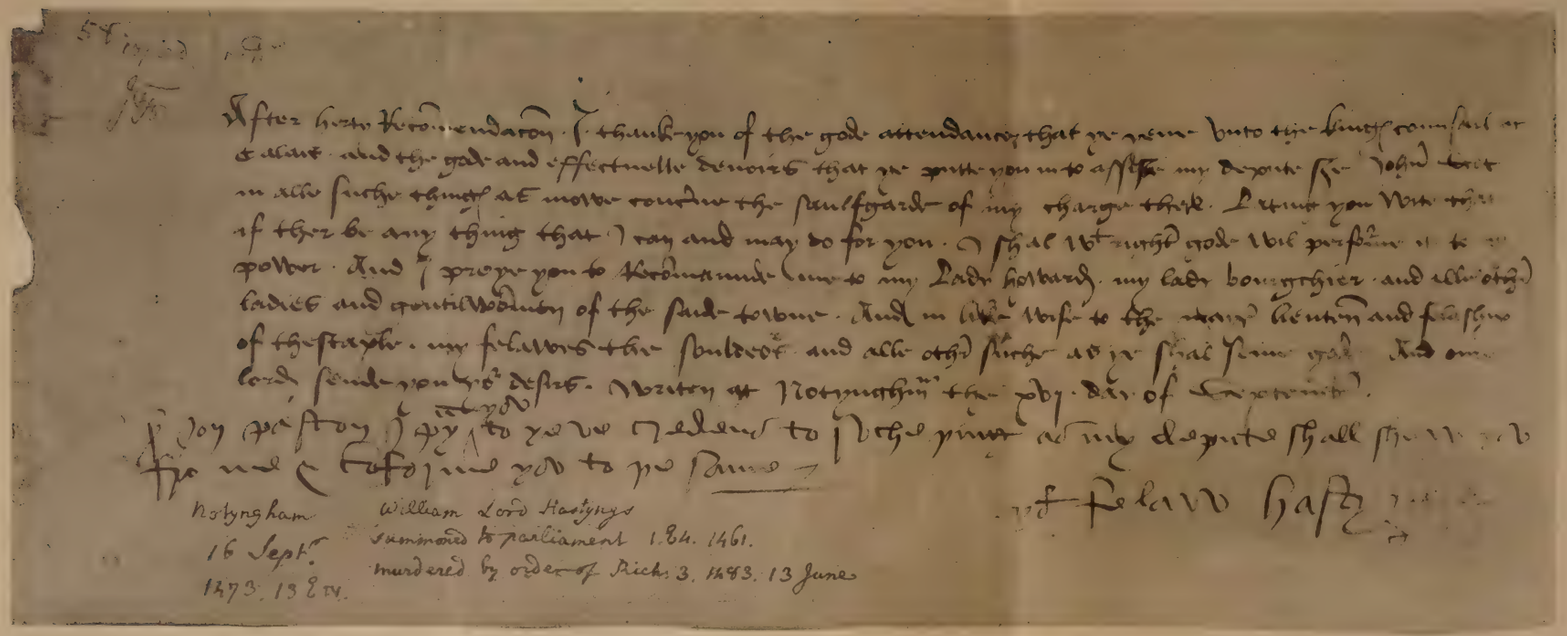
(*F.* i. 68; *G.* II. 227).

From Sir John Paston, Margaret's eldest son, there are 27 letters. He was inclined to be a spendthrift and displeased his mother by his delay in erecting a suitable monument to his father's memory in Bromholm Priory, but a certain liveliness in his letters and his interest in literature show consciousness of the new world which was dawning even in fifteenth century England. Among the letters is a list of Sir John's English books, drawn up soon after 1475, when Caxton's Game and Play of the Chess, which is mentioned therein, was first printed (*F.* ii. 300; *G.* v. 987). There is also a letter from the scribe William Ebisham to Sir John asking rather plaintively for a settlement of his account and "for almes one of your old gowns" (*F.* ii. 10; *G.* v. 695).

Sir John Paston's younger brother, also named John, is the writer of 11 letters in this collection. At the end of a long letter dated Norwich, 21 Sept. 1472, to his brother in London, he writes:

> Now think on me good Lord, for if I have not an Hawk, I shall wax fat for default of labour, and dead for default of company by my troth. No more but I pray God send you all your desires and me my mewed Gosshawk in haste, or rather than fail, a Soar hawk; there is a Grocer dwelling right over against the well with two buckets, a little from St. Helen's, hath ever hawks to sell.

(*F.* ii. 102; *G.* v. 823).

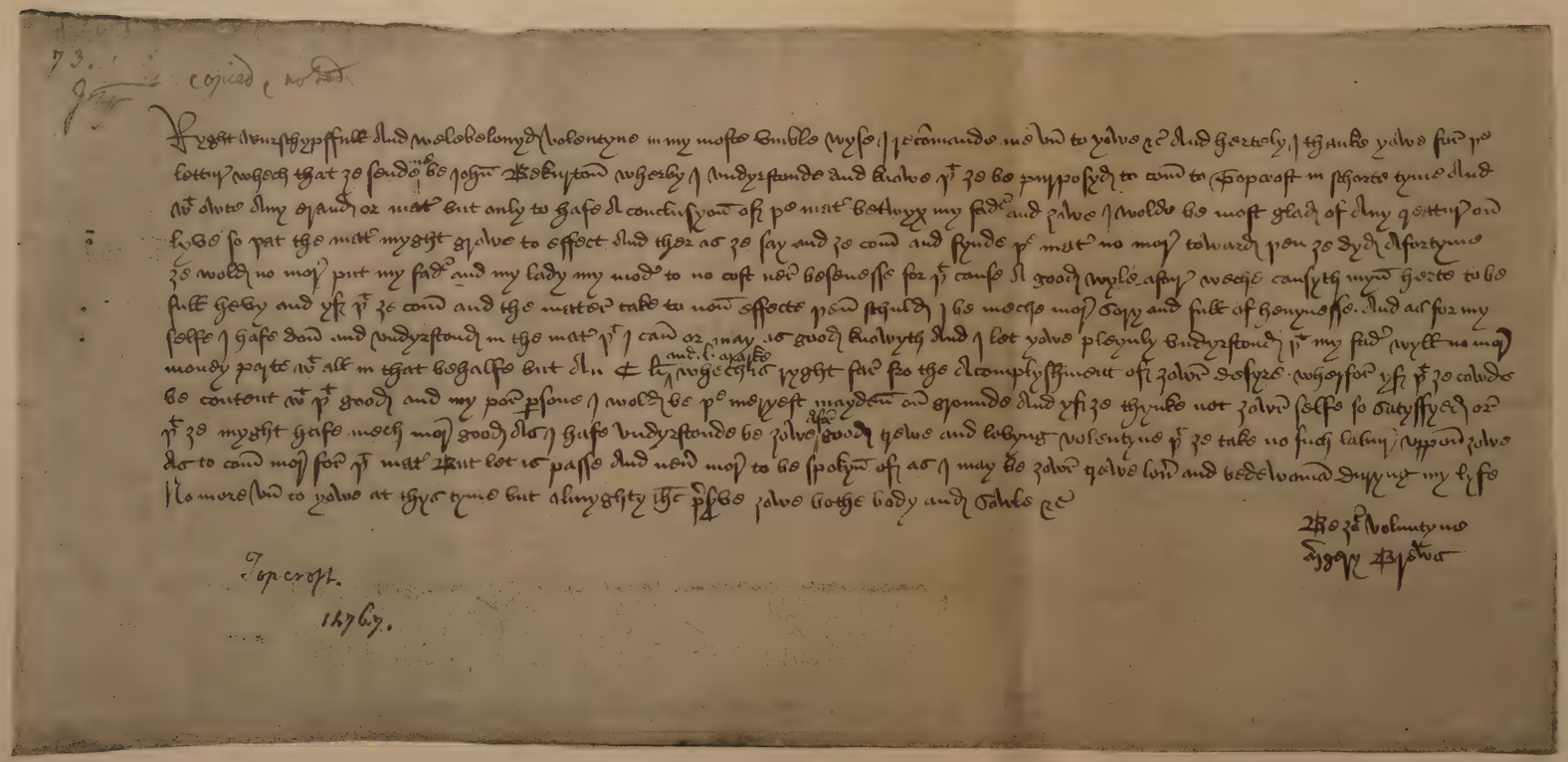


Nottyngham
16 Sept.
1473. 13 Ed IV.

William Lord Hastyngs
summoned to parliament 1.84. 1461.
murdered by order of Rich: 3. 1483. 13 June

To my Worship[illegible] Middleton and Sir John Paston knyght

Lord Hastings to Sir John Middleton and Sir John Paston, 16 Sept. 1473.



Copcroft.
1476.7.

To my Right Worshipful John Paston the Younger be this letter delyvyd

Margery Brews to John Paston the Younger, 1476-7.

This John Paston was present at the marriage of Edward IV's sister Margaret to Charles Duke of Burgundy at Bruges in July, 1468, and writes his mother a long account of the wedding (which took place at 5 a.m.), and of the ensuing tournament (*F.* ii. 2; *G.* iv. 684).

John Paston, the younger, married Margery Brews in 1477, and we have several letters about the match and two from Margery herself after her marriage, in one of which she tells her husband in London that she has nothing to wear this winter (except her black—and the green which is so uncomfortable) and that she misses him very much (*F.* ii. 256; *G.* v. 923).

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THE LETTERS FORM AN UNIQUE RECORD OF ENGLISH LIFE IN THE XV CENTURY; AS DOCUMENTS FOR ENGLISH SOCIAL HISTORY THEY STAND ALONE.

IT APPEARS EXCEEDINGLY UNLIKELY THAT A SIMILAR COLLECTION WILL EVER AGAIN BE DISCOVERED OR OFFERED FOR SALE.

END OF SALE.

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THE OPPORTUNITY OF ACQUIRING A SET OF DOCUMENTS WHICH GIVE A CLEAR-CUT VIEW OF ENGLISH HISTORY IS RARE INDEED. THERE ARE GOVERNMENT MANUALS, SOPHISTICATED THE HISTORIES THAT ARE PLEASING WITH-KNOWN COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS WHICH EACH TOOK POINT TO US. BY THESE COLLECTIONS THE PASTON LETTERS, WHOSE SURVIVAL IS SOMEWHAT SHORT OF A MIRACLE, ARE THE SIMPLEST, ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING AND BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT.

THE LETTERS TOOK AS THEIR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LIFE IN THE XV. CENTURY: AS DOCUMENTS FOR ENGLISH SOCIAL HISTORY THEY STAND ALONE.

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